UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Vale District Office
Jordan Resource Area

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM REVIEW RECORD

EA Number OR-030-02-008 **Date Submitted for Comment** _____ **Complete Review**_____
Proposed Action Drill a well
Proposed Name Blue Mountain Pass Well
Project Leader Cameron Rasor

DISCIPLINE/NAME	DATE REVIEWED	INITIALS	REVIEW COMMENTS
Range & Wild horses **Rasor**			
Vegetation **Miles**			
Botany & T&E Plants **Findley**			
Wildlife & T&E Animals **Sadowski**			
Fisheries **Tait**			
Soil/Water/Air **Wenderoth**			
Geology/Minerals			
Cultural **Pritchard**			
Lands & Realty **Manezes**			
Recreation/Wild & Scenic River **Christensen**			
Wilderness **Christensen**			
Fire Management			
Engineering & Force Acct. **Pritchard**			
Noxious Weeds **Silva**			
P&E Coordinator **Miles**			Final Review & Filing
Project Leader **Rasor**			Final EA & FONSI/Decision Record
Area Manager **Taylor**			Final EA Review & FONSI/Decision

This page is to be filed with the
AD/CE/EA & FONSI/DECISION RECORD
BLUE MOUNTAIN PASS WELL
Environmental Assessment
EA # OR-030-02-008

BLM OFFICE: Vale District, Jordan Resource Area

PROPOSED ACTION: Drill a well on the summit of Blue Mountain in the Fifteen Mile Community Allotment

LOCATION: Fifteen Mile Community Allotment, Summit North Pasture,
NW1/4SW1/4, Sec. 32 T37S R42E

APPLICANT: David Etchart

CONFORMANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAND USE PLAN

This proposed action is subject to the following land use plans:

Preferred Land Use Alternative (MFP), 1983

Southern Rangeland Program Summary, 1984

These plans have been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms with the land use plans terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5

REMARKS

This project is in conformance with the MFP and RPS and the following objectives: 1) to improve ecological condition through the development and implementation of economically feasible range improvements and 2) to improve and maintain vegetation and soil conditions to benefit watershed, wildlife, and livestock.

A Programmatic Environmental Assessment, number OR-030-0-44 for proposed well and pipeline construction and use in the BLM, Vale District, was prepared in 1979. This document was broad in scope and the material contained in the EA was applicable to the major portion of the district. A copy of the Programmatic EA has been attached to this EA for referral purposes.

The livestock permittee would procure funding for this project.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

The primary need for the proposed action is to facilitate livestock management in the Fifteen Mile Community Allotment. The proposed well and pipeline would supply a reliable water source for the Blue Mountain Pasture, Summit South Pasture, Summit North Pasture, and Sheep Corral Pasture. When spring runoff is adequate,

Blue Mountain Pit Reservoir feeds existing pipelines and troughs. In past years, Blue Mountain Pit Reservoir has not been full enough to feed the pipelines. Consequently, the permittee has been hauling water to the existing troughs on the existing pipeline. The new well and pipeline would tie into the existing pipelines that are fed by Blue Mountain Pit Reservoir and provide reliable water for Blue Mountain Pasture, Summit South Pasture, Summit North Pasture, and Sheep Corral Pasture.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Alternative I: Proposed Action

The proposed action would be to construct a well in the Summit North Pasture of the Fifteen Mile Community Allotment. The well would be located approximately .25 miles from Highway 95 (see figure 1). The well would be 8 inches in diameter and range from 200-1500 feet in depth. The construction phase would involve drilling a hole and casing it to State of Oregon standards. The drilling phase would involve the use of mobile well drilling equipment. The well would be outfitted with a submersible pump and powered by electricity from Harney County Electric Company. Harney Electric Company would have to acquire an easement to place 2 or 3 power poles on federal land. The well site and meter loop post would be fenced in a 12-foot by 12-foot exclosure. The pumped water would be transported via a pipeline to Blue Mountain Pit Reservoir. The pipeline would be 2 inches in diameter, approximately .8 miles long and buried at least 18 inches deep. It would be placed on the north shoulder (within the disturbed area) of an existing BLM road. The ditch would be dug out with a small trencher. Where the pipeline crosses the road near the reservoir, the line would be placed in a 6 inch well casing to prevent damage to the pipeline by the road and maintenance equipment. Disturbed soils would be rehabilitated to blend into the surrounding soil surface and re-seeded with native grasses in order to replace lost ground cover (as a result of this project) and reduce soil loss from wind and water erosion. Noxious weeds would be treated by the BLM if disturbance from this project allows noxious weeds to become established. BLM personnel would monitor all phases of construction and a Cooperative Agreement with BLM well and pipeline specifications would be adhered too. The permittee would be responsible for funding the entire project and maintaining the project. Botany and Cultural inventories have been conducted to ensure no impacts.

B. Alternative II

The well, associated equipment, and pipeline would not be constructed. Operator would continue to haul water during dry years.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Fifteen Mile Community Allotment (#01201) is located north and northwest of McDermitt, NV.

The allotment varies greatly in elevation and topography. Elevation ranges from 4,500 feet to 7,900 feet. Topography varies from flat or rolling hills to steep canyons and rim rock cliffs.

1. Vegetation

The dominant plant species on the landscape surrounding the proposed action is wyoming sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis*) and bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudorogneria spicatum*). The majority of the effected area is mid to late seral range. In accordance with 50 CFR Part 17, the Resource Area Botanist conducted a field search to ensure that actions authorized by the BLM would not contribute to the need for a candidate species to become listed. No known or suspected special status plants were discovered within the proposed area.

2. Soils

Soils within the project area consist of loamy, shallow (Unit 55) or loam to heavy clay loam, shallow (Unit 56) and are well drained. Unit 55 and 56 soils are underlain by cemented pans over stratified loamy sand and gravel. Typically, Unit 55 and 56 soils occur on gently sloping to moderate steep old alluvial and colluvial fans and high terrace remnants with 7 to 20 percent slopes. The effective rooting depth on these soils is shallow (14-24 inches) and is limited primarily by the cemented pan.

The soils found in the Blue Mountain Pass area were surveyed and described in Oregon's Long Range Requirements for Water 1969, Appendix I-11, Owyhee Drainage Basin. The project area consists of one soil mapping unit from this fourth-order soil survey; 55-56/3-4. The unit incorporates two classification units that occur in various percentages within the unit and have two-slope group that ranges between 7-20 percent.

Unit 55-56/3-4

Unit 55 soils with about 30 percent Unit 56 , 7-20 percent slopes.

Classification Unit 55

Soils are loamy, shallow, well-drained soils with cemented pans over stratified loamy sand and gravel. They occur on very extensive, gently sloping to moderate sleep old alluvial and colluvial fans and high terrace remnants. Soils occur at elevations from 3,000 to 5,500 feet. Average annual precipitation ranges from 8 to 11 inches, and mean annual air temperature centers around 47 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consist of gravelly loam, gravelly loam over silica and lime cemented pans.

Classification Unit 56

Soils are shallow, well drained with clayey subsoils and cemented pans over stratified loamy sand and gravel. They occur on very extensive, gently sloping to moderate sleep old alluvial and colluvial fans and high terrace remnants. Soils occur at elevations from 3,000 to 6,000 feet. Average annual precipitation ranges

from 8 to 11 inches, and mean annual air temperature centers around 47 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consists of gravelly loam, gravelly clay loam, and heavy clay loam over silica and lime cemented pans.

No perennial flowing water, seep, or spring sources lie within the project area. The project site is located between two first-order ephemeral drainages. Numerous stock water supply wells in the general area (Township 36 South, Range 40-42 East and Township 39 South, Range 42 East) exist in unconsolidated alluvium or adjacent to alluvial deposits. One well recently drilled approximately 12 miles to the northwest and down slope of the project area for livestock did not produce water. This dry well site is in the same geologic formation as the proposed site. The formation consists of mostly fine-grained tuffaceous sedimentary rock and tuffs with conglomerate layers present in some places.

3. Air Quality

Air quality is considered to be very good in the project area.

4. Noxious Weeds

Two noxious weeds, spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*), a biennial or short-lived perennial and diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*), an annual or short-lived perennial, are known to exist within one mile of the well site. Spotted and diffuse knapweed are Malheur County A-listed weeds and B-listed by Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). Spotted knapweed is also on ODA's "T" or Targeted noxious weed list, indicating it is an economic threat to the state and proposed to receive priority treatment action. Whitetop (*Cardaria draba*), a deep-rooted, long-lived perennial is also known to be within the vicinity of the well site. Whitetop is "C" listed by both Malheur County and ODA. Both knapweeds are high priority weeds for BLM. Whitetop has limited distribution in that area which makes is it a high priority weed for the BLM.

5. Livestock

The Fifteen Mile Community Allotment (I category) has 5 permittees authorized to graze. Dave Etchart is one of the permittees authorized to graze cattle in the Fifteen Mile Community Allotment. His cattle utilize the affected pastures. The current grazing system within the affected pastures is usually a three pasture, rest/rotation system between Summit North, Summit South & Sheep Corral. One of the three pastures is normally rested every year. Grazing within these pastures takes place in the fall. Approximately 300-350 cattle graze the pastures for approximately 45 days. Shown below is an example of the normal grazing system.

Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	

Summit North	09/15-10/14	Summit North	REST	Summit North	10/15-10/31
Summit South	10/15-10/31	Summit South	09/15-10/14	Summit South	REST
Sheep Corral	REST	Sheep Corral	10/15-10/31	Sheep Corral	09/15-10/14

During drought years, Blue Mountain Pit Reservoir is not full enough to feed existing pipelines and troughs. Consequently, the permittee has been hauling water to the existing troughs on the existing pipeline. The permittee hauls water to approximately 75% of the existing troughs on the pipeline. 25% of the troughs are not accessible because of several roads being impassable with a large water truck.

6. Wildlife

Mountain foothill habitats in the project area support a community of upland wildlife associated with mid-elevation Wyoming sagebrush. The key wildlife management species in the project area is the greater sage-grouse. The key seasons of use are summer, fall and winter. No wildlife inventories were conducted specifically for this assessment. The following list of species likely to use the project area is hypothetical based on professional knowledge of the general area and habitat relationships guidance described in Wildlife Habitats in Managed Rangelands; The Great Basin of Southeastern Oregon.

Taxonomic Order	Family	Common name	blue mtn	Scientific name
Falconiformes	Cathartidae	turkey vulture	x	*Cathartes aura*
Falconiformes	Accipitridae	golden eagle	x	*Aquila chrysaetos*
Falconiformes	Accipitridae	red-tailed hawk	x	*Buteo jamaicensis*
Falconiformes	Accipitridae	swainson's hawk	x	*Buteo swainsoni*
Falconiformes	Accipitridae	northern harrier	x	*Circus cyaneus*
Falconiformes	Falconidae	american kestrel	x	*Falco sparverius*
Galliformes	Phasianidae	chukar partridge	x	*Alectoris chukar*
Galliformes	Phasianidae	california quail	x	*Callipepla californica*
Galliformes	**Tetraonidae**	**greater sage-grouse**	**x**	***Centrocercus urophasianus***
Charadriiformes	Charadriidae	killdeer	x	*Charadrius vociferous*
Passeriformes	Alaudidae	horned lark	x	*Eremophila alpestris*
Passeriformes	Corvidae	american crow	x	*Corvus brachyrhynchos*
Passeriformes	Corvidae	common raven	x	*Corvus corax*
Passeriformes	Troglodytidae	rock wren	x	*Salpinctes obsoletus*
Passeriformes	Mimidae	sage thrasher	x	*Oreoscoptes montanus*
Passeriformes	Musicapidae	american robin	x	*Turdus migratorius*
Passeriformes	Laniidae	loggerhead shrike	x	*Lanius ludovicianus*
Passeriformes	Emberizidae	vesper sparrow	x	*Pooecetes gramineus*
Passeriformes	Emberizidae	brewer's sparrow	x	*Spizella breweri*
Passeriformes	Emberizidae	western meadowlark	x	*Sturnella neglecta*
Squamata	Iguanidae	desert horned lizard	x	*Phrynosoma platyrhinos*
Squamata	Iguanidae	sagebrush lizard	x	*Sceloporus graciosus*
Squamata	Iguanidae	western fence lizard	x	*Sceloporus occidentalis*
Squamata	Iguanidae	side-blotched lizard	x	*Uta stansburiana*

Serpentes	Coulbridae	yellow-bellied racer	x	*Coluber constrictor*
Serpentes	Coulbridae	gopher snake	x	*Pituophis melanoleucus*
Serpentes	Coulbridae	common garter snake	x	*Thamnophis sirtalis*
Serpentes	Viperidae	great basin rattlesnake	x	*Crotalis viridis*
Artiodactyla	Cervidae	mule deer	x	*Odocoileus hemionus*
Artiodactyla	Bovidae	California bighorn sheep	x	*Ovis canadensis californiana*
Carnivora	Canidae	coyote	x	*Canis latrans*
Carnivora	Mustelidae	badger	x	*Taxidea taxus*
Lagomorpha	Leporidae	black-tailed jackrabbit	x	*Lepus californicus*
Lagomorpha	Leporidae	mountain cottontail	x	*Sylvilagus nuttalli*
Rodentia	Cricetidae	sagebrush vole	x	*Lagurus curtatus*
Rodentia	Cricetidae	montane vole	x	*Microtus montanus*
Rodentia	Cricetidae	deer mouse	x	*Peromyscus maniculatus*
Rodentia	Geomyidae	northern pocket gopher	x	*Thomomys talpoides*
Rodentia	Heteromyidae	great basin pocket mouse	x	*Perognathus parvus*
Rodentia	Sciuridae	least chipmunk	x	*Eutamias minimus*

There are no federally listed or candidate species of wildlife that occupy the project area. As such there is no need to consult or conference with the US Fish and Wildlife Service regarding Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

Greater sage-grouse (BLM Assessment Species) may occupy the project area during the summer/fall/winter period. The most important summer/fall habitat components are shrubs for escape cover and late season forbs associated with mesic upland habitats or riparian areas. Shrub cover necessary for forage, thermal cover, and escape cover are most important in the winter. One strutting ground, which has supported a high count of 6 adults, and suitable breeding habitat for the species is located at higher elevations associated with Blue Mountain. The lek, which is about 5 miles away from the pipeline affected by the proposed action, is located in section 7 of Township 38 South and Range 42 East.

California bighorn sheep (BLM Sensitive) are resident at higher elevations around Blue Mountain where there is quality forage and habitat security from human activities. Habitats within the project area are generally considered to be peripheral range for bighorn. At best, bighorn are likely to occupy habitats within the project area during very severe winter snowfall conditions, which would drive them out of the upper elevations around Blue Mountain.

An upland habitat assessment of shrub canopy conditions was completed within the pastures affected by the proposed action in the summer of 2001 (see Jordan RA study files). The assessments revealed that wyoming sagebrush canopies predominantly ranged between 10% to over 20% in most areas. Habitats classified as grasslands (0% sagebrush cover) or near grasslands (traces to 5% canopy cover) are present as very fine scale mosaics. There are few lingering effects of past vegetation treatments (e.g overstory fragmentation of hundreds or thousands of acres) to sagebrush canopies as a consequence of the Vale Project. As such the pastures affected by the proposed action are capable of supporting a wide array of animals dependent upon sagebrush habitats on a

yearlong basis.

7. Threatened or Endangered Species

There are no Threatened or Endangered species in the proposed area.

8. Recreation and Visual Resources

Dispersed outdoor recreation in the proposed area consists primarily of hunting. Some dispersed sightseeing and day hiking may occur.

9. Cultural Resources

In accordance with 36 CFR 800, the Resource Area Archeologist conducted a field search and Class III cultural resource inventory to determine if the proposed action would have an effect on cultural resources. No cultural resources were found.

10. Other Mandatory Elements

The following mandatory elements are either not present or would not be affected by the proposed action or alternatives:

Critical Elements	Affected	
	Yes	No
Air Quality		X
Areas of Critical Environmental Concerns		X
Cultural Resources		X
Prime and Unique Farmland		X
Floodplains		X
Native American Religious Concerns		X
Threatened and Endangered Species		X
Hazardous and Solid Wastes		X
Ground Water Quality		X
Surface Water Quality		X
Wetlands and Riparian Zones		X
Wild and Scenic Rivers	X	
Wilderness		X
Invasive and Nonnative Species	X	
Environmental Justice		X
Adverse Energy Impact		X

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. **Alternative I: Proposed Action**

The impacted area of the proposed well and pipeline would be approximately .1 acres. The pipeline would impact approximately .8 mile, however, the impacts are negligible because the pipeline would lie within the disturbed area of an existing road, which has been maintained by the BLM for years. The impact would be greatest around the 8-inch diameter well site location, electric meter loop post, fence, and pipeline.

1. Vegetation

Vegetation in the immediate area of the disturbed site would be removed. However, following rehabilitation, the vegetation would be reestablished where applicable, and soil loss would be reduced to pre-disturbance levels. Reestablishment of native vegetation would reduce the chance of noxious weeds occupying the disturbed areas. However, if noxious weeds do become established in the disturbed areas, it is expected that the noxious weed treatment would successfully eliminate the noxious weed problem. Since no new water troughs are being established and the water would be piped into existing water troughs, there would be no new impacts to vegetation from livestock grazing use. If the well is installed, a reliable source of water would feed all water troughs along the pipeline. The increase in available water would lower utilization levels on vegetation within the affected pastures and increase individual plant health and vigor. This is a result of livestock being spread out over the existing pipeline and troughs and not concentrated at any one water source.

2. Soils

Soils in the immediate area of these disturbed sites would be temporarily exposed to short term, insignificant wind and water erosion until the seeding rehabilitation or other vegetation occupies the site. Disturbed soils would be rehabilitated to blend into the surrounding soil surface and reseeded (as needed) with native grasses in order to replace ground cover and reduce soil loss from wind and water erosion.

3. Air Quality

Short-term impacts to air quality would dissipate and be substantially unnoticeable within a matter of minutes after the project is finished.

4. Noxious Weeds

The disturbance of the well and pipeline construction could provide a new seedbed for spotted and diffuse knapweed and whitetop. To prevent such occurrence the construction area would be reseeded to perennial species. The perennial species would help prevent the spread and takeover of the site by noxious weeds and invasion of cheatgrass communities. Follow up monitoring for noxious weeds and proper treatment would prevent any new

noxious weed infestations around the proposed well site, pipeline and reservoir.

5. Livestock Grazing

Implementation of this project would provide for a reliable source of water for livestock and wildlife in the Blue Mountain Pasture, Summit South Pasture, Summit North Pasture, and Sheep Corral Pasture during drought years so that water hauling would no longer be needed. Having water available from a well would allow for more consistent water during drought years since water hauling is based on having time to haul water and having the equipment available to haul the water. Many times during the summer water trucks break down or during haying season there is not enough time to keep water troughs full. This project eliminates this hassle. This project would not change the grazing system. However, a more reliable water source would supply more troughs with water on a more regular basis, which in turn would disperse cattle throughout the pasture better than if the permittee hauled water.

6. Wildlife

More consistent summer/fall water availability for livestock grazing would not be expected to result in adverse impacts to greater sage-grouse nesting success as described in the current management literature. This is because sage grouse breeding habitat is located at higher elevation rangelands located three or more miles away from the proposed action.

Prolonged water availability in troughs along the pipeline would likely benefit some species dependent on drinking water including pronghorn. However, the benefits accrued to wildlife would be of relatively minor significance.

7. Threatened or Endangered Species

This project would not affect nor create any threatened or endangered species.

8. Recreation and Visual Resources

The proposed project would have minimal visual impacts. The only portion of the proposed project that would be above ground is the meter loop and exclosure fence. They would be very difficult to see from the highway because the well site is approximately .25 miles off Highway 95 and in tall sagebrush.

9. Cultural Resources

No cultural resources would be affected by this project.

B. Alternative II- No Action

Under this alternative, the well would not be drilled and intermittent reservoirs and water hauling would be the sole source of livestock and wildlife water.

1. Vegetation

Vegetation around the proposed site would remain the same. Vegetation health within the affected pastures may decline because a rotation grazing system would be very difficult to implement due to the lack of dependable water. Utilization rates around the existing water troughs which are supplied by water hauling would continue to be higher than if all the troughs had water.

2. Soils

Soils would not be altered or harmed.

3. Air Quality

Air quality would decline while the permittee is hauling water. Dust contaminants from the road would contribute to a reduction in air quality.

4. Noxious Weeds

Noxious weeds would continue to populate the surrounding area.

5. Livestock Grazing

Livestock grazing would continue with the current grazing system. Water would be supplied to cattle from the permittee hauling it.

6. Wildlife

The no action alternative would be expected to result in overall impacts very similar to those described under the proposed action. Under this alternative, slightly fewer and lesser impacts to wildlife forage and shrub cover would be expected compared to the proposed action.

7. Threatened and Endangered Species

There would be no impact to threatened and endangered species.

8. Recreation and Visual Resources

Impacts to dispersed recreation activities would remain the same as it is now.

9. Cultural Resources

There would be no effect on cultural resources.

MITIGATION MEASURES AND RESIDUAL IMPACTS

Mitigation measures and residual impacts would be limited to those addressed in EA # OR-030-0-44. During surface-disturbing construction and maintenance activities, the holder shall ensure that all construction equipment and vehicles are cleaned of all vegetation (stems, leaves, seeds and all other vegetative parts) prior to entering public lands in order to minimize the transport and spread of noxious weeds. Noxious weed monitoring would be increased to insure the project does not increase the spread of weeds. Noxious weeds found would be treated in a timely manner.

PERSONS CONSULTED

David Etchart, Livestock Permittee

Steve Maher, Livestock Permittee

BLM STAFF SPECIALISTS

Tom Miles, Supervisory Rangeland Management Specialist
Cameron Rasor, Rangeland Management Specialist
Cynthia Tait, Fisheries Biologist
Jon Sadowski, Wildlife Biologist/T & E Animals
Diane Pritchard, Archeologist
John Whitley, Civil Engineering Technician
Jean Findley, Botanist
Susie Manezes, Reality Specialist
Jack Wenderoth, Soil/Air/Water
Tom Christensen, Recreation/Wilderness
Jerry Erstrom, Weeds Specialist
Vern Pritchard, Engineer
Dave Evans, Engineering Equipment Operator Supervisor

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

I have reviewed EA, OR-030-02-008 and determined that the proposed action with mitigating measures would not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. My rational for this finding of no significant impacts is as follows: All the existing troughs and pipelines have been in use and part of the current grazing system for years. The construction of the well would not change or increase the areas of cattle use. There would be minimal local damage to vegetation around the well site, 12 foot by 12 foot exclosure, and pipeline. All damage to vegetation would be rehabilitated with native seed consistent with existing vegetation. The well and exlosure would be placed adjacent to an existing road and the pipeline would be installed within the disturbed area of the same road.

Approving this well would provide a reliable source of water for the Blue Mountain Pasture, Summit South Pasture, Summit North Pasture, and Sheep Corral Pasture without water hauling and without causing any long-term impacts to vegetation, air quality, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, recreation, or cultural resources. The permittee would benefit from the well because water hauling is expensive and time consuming. In addition, having reliable water would allow the option of using the pasture during dryer times of the year in a rotation grazing system.

No impacts were identified that would significantly affect any aspect of the human environment. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the land use plan.

/s/ Jerry Taylor — January 14, 2003

Jerry Taylor, Field Manager, Jordan Resource Area — Date